

December 06, 2012

News Release

For Immediate Release

Members Named to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Task Force

Springfield Mayor Bob Stephens announced today the names of the eight voting members and one non-voting chairperson recommended by City Council to serve on a Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Task Force. The Public Involvement Committee will continue to accept citizen applications for the remaining seven task force openings until noon, Friday, Dec. 7.

City Council selections for the task force include:

- **Judge Miles Sweeney**, non-voting chairperson, selected by Mayor Bob Stephens; view [Judge Sweeney's biographical info](#) (pdf)
- **Reverend Michael Overton**, selected by Councilman Jerry Compton
- **David Trippe**, selected by Councilwoman Cynthia Rushefsky
- **Dr. Robert Saylor**, selected by Mayor Bob Stephens
- **Dick Hardy**, selected by Councilman John Rush
- **Randy Doennig**, selected by Councilman Scott Bailes
- **Lorie Latimer**, selected by Councilman Jeff Seifried
- **Lola Butcher**, selected by Councilwoman Jan Fisk
- **Lynne Meyerkord**, selected by Councilman Doug Burlison

The Public Involvement Committee meets at noon, Dec. 10 to review the applications submitted by citizens. The full slate of nominees will be submitted to the Mayor for review before going to a full Council vote, which is likely to take place at the Dec. 17 meeting.

Once appointments to the task force have been made, members will have until June 30 to submit a report and make a recommendation to City Council. Any recommendation will still require approval by City Council before they take effect.

Scope of Duties

- Research and investigate the level of discrimination in Springfield because of sexual orientation or transgender issues and the level of urgency to resolve any identified problem. Also, research and investigate the appropriate level for solution if any problems are identified, whether that level be local, county, state, or federal.
- Meet with a variety of stakeholders to collect input and hear various perspectives, including, but not limited to GLBT members, not-for-profit advocacy groups, private businesses, the medical community, the business community, the faith-based community, the academic community, and any other group with which the Committee desires to meet. This Task Force may consider any option.
- Provide written recommendations to the Mayor and City Manager, ranking the one or more recommended options that should be considered, recognizing that City Council must ultimately

approve any proposal. In addition to ranking the Task Force's recommendations, the report should indicate the advantages and disadvantages of each option considered from the perspective of the citizens of Springfield.

The History of the Issue

City Council voted in August to table and "send to task force" a controversial proposal which would have added sexual orientation and gender identity to the City's anti-discrimination law. City council formally adopted [a resolution to create this Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Citizens' Task Force](#) (pdf), and charge the group to look into discrimination related to sexual orientation and gender identity in the city.

The task force will allow voices into the discussion that were not a part of the ordinance's formation, Mayor Stephens said.

About the City's Current Non-discrimination Ordinance

City Code currently prohibits discrimination based on factors such as race, religion and disability when offering employment, housing or public accommodations, such as hotel rooms or restaurants. Federal law includes some limited protections, but Missouri law currently contains no provision against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The original proposal was brought forward by the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights, a citizen board in charge of investigating and mediating discrimination complaints. It would have amended the existing City Code to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories when it comes to employment, public housing and public accommodations.

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